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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/757,813	01/15/2004	Donald C. Roe	7294C	5408

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THE PROCTER & GAMBLE COMPANY
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DIVISION
WINTON HILL TECHNICAL CENTER - BOX 161
6110 CENTER HILL AVENUE
CINCINNATI, OH 45224

EXAMINER

REICHLE, KARIN M

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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3761

DATE MAILED: 06/12/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 5-8-06 has been entered.

Specification

The lengthy specification has not been checked to the extent necessary to determine the presence of all possible minor errors. Applicant's cooperation is requested in correcting any errors of which applicant may become aware in the specification.

For Example:

Description

2. The use of the trademarks in the amended paragraphs beginning at page 7, line 19 and page 38, beginning at line 19 have been noted in this application. They should be capitalized wherever it appears and be accompanied by the generic terminology.

Although the use of trademarks is permissible in patent applications, the proprietary nature of the marks should be respected and every effort made to prevent their use in any manner which might adversely affect their validity as trademarks.

It is noted that trademarks should be shown by all capital letters or a symbol not both.

3. The disclosure is objected to because of the following informalities: 1) In claims 5 and 15, Applicant sets forth “a size” of the particle structure with dimensions of mm. However, it is unclear on page 27, last paragraph, what dimension of the particle this size is referring to, i.e. any dimension? A specific dimension? A clear description of the structure which has such size should be set forth. Note also the paragraph bridging pages 28-29.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Language Interpretation

4. The claim language is interpreted in light of the definitions set forth in the paragraph bridging pages 5-6. Any other claim terminology which has not been specifically defined will be interpreted in light of its broadest common definition. Therefore, in claims 1 and 10, it is claimed that the acceptance member is disposed “adjacent” to a body surface of the core. Since the term “adjacent” has not been specifically defined, the dictionary definition, i.e. “Close to, lying near”, will be applied. It is noted that the terminology “near” is considered relative. It is also noted claims 4 and 12 recite the element being a portion of the topsheet. Note page 21, line 18-page 22, line 3 of the instant specification. Therefore, an acceptance element anywhere on the article on the body surface of the core will be deemed to meet the independent claims and an acceptance element forming a portion of the topsheet will be deemed to meet claims 4 and 12. Also in light of the discussion supra, with respect to the language “a size” in claims 5 and 15, such language will be considered to be met by any dimension of particulate structure of between about 1mm and about 10mm. With regard to the claim terminology “fecal storage

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element”, Applicant’s 5-8-06 remarks refer to page 25, lines 8-10 of the instant application which sets forth that the storage element is a storage element which is “capable of storing viscous bodily wastes”. The remarks also refer to page 15, lines 25-27 of the application where a “viscous fluid bodily waste” is defined as “any waste discarded from the body having a viscosity greater than about 10cP and less than about 2×10^5 cP at a shear rate of one l/sec” in a controlled stress rheometry test. Lines 15-18 of the same page 15 set forth that runny feces or menses are “viscous fluid bodily waste”. Finally, lines 29-31 of the same page 15 point out the viscosities of water and peanut butter for reference. In light of such disclosures, a “fecal storage element” as claimed will be interpreted as an element which is capable of storing fecal waste having a viscosity greater than about 10cP and less than about 2×10^5 cP at a shear rate of one l/sec in a controlled stress rheometry test.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

5. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

6. Claims 1-7, 10-12 and 15-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Thompson et al ‘208, and thereby Thompson ‘135, Kimberly-Clark EP ‘417, Moore et al ‘642 and Lash et al ‘022.

Claim 1: See Claim Language Interpretation section supra and Thompson ‘208 at Figures, col. 5, lines 39-44, col. 7, line 57-col. 8, line 6, col. 14, line 41-col. 19, line 2, and thereby Thompson ‘135 at especially the Figures and the entire disclosure of EP ‘471, col. 9, line 54-col. 14, line 38, col. 21, line 30-col. 21, line 2, and thereby Moore ‘642 at col. 1, lines 46-62

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and Lash et al '022 at col. 4, line 29-col. 6, line 35 and col. 14, lines 55-58 and 64 et seq, i.e.

Thompson et al teaches a disposable absorbent article for wearing on or about a lower torso of a wearer for receiving bodily exudates which comprises a topsheet, e.g., 9, a backsheet, e.g., 12, joined with the topsheet, an absorbent core, e.g., at least a layer of 11, an acceptance element, i.e. at least a portion of the topsheet, i.e. disposed adjacent the body surface of the core, which comprises at least one aperture having an area of between 0.2 sq. mm to 25 sq. mm (See Thompson '208 at col. 15, line 61-col. 16, line 12 and the paragraph bridging cols. 18-19, i.e. EP '417 teaches filaments of a certain diameter, a topsheet having a certain number of filaments per square inch to define openings of equal size therebetween, i.e. the area between the filaments per sq. inch calculated from such disclosed specifics includes apertures having an area as claimed), and a storage element, e.g., 10 or another layer of 11, between the acceptance element and the core. Claim 1 further requires 1) the storage element to have a compressive resistance of at least about 70%, 2) the apertures have an effective aperture size of between about 0.2 sq. mm to about 25 sq. mm and 3) the storage element being a "fecal storage element" and separate from the absorbent core. With regard to 1), while Thompson '208 teaches a layer 10 having resilience and a ratio of wet to dry caliper of at least 80%, and preventing flow interference while being form fitting and a layer 11 of curled, twisted, chemically stiffened and crosslinked fibers, such fibers having increased dry resilience, i.e. the ability to return toward an expanded original state upon release of a compressional force applied thereto, and retaining their configuration during use at the portions cited supra, Thompson et al does not teach such layers having a "compression resistance" of at least about 70%. It is however noted that at page 29, lines 8-23 of the instant specification that Applicants while expressing the desire for the storage element to resist

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compression when a force is applied to maintain a significant level of storage capacity and restore itself to substantially its original thickness when the force is removed, does not disclose the criticality of the specific resistance claimed, i.e. the criticality of 70% rather than, for example, 45%. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ a compressive resistance of at least about 70% on the Thompson et al device since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art as in the instant case, i.e. see discussion supra, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges by routine experimentation. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233. With regard to 2), see page 25, lines 2-5, of the instant application, and thereby Roe '338. Furthermore, see again the portions of Thompson '208 and EP '417 cited supra, i.e. the topsheet of Thompson et al comprises at least one aperture having an area of between 0.2 sq. mm to 25 sq. mm, e.g. apertures of equal size of such area, for enhanced acceptance of fluid. Therefore, it is the Examiner's first position that there is sufficient factual evidence for one to conclude that the topsheet of Thompson '208 would necessarily and inevitably include the claimed "effective aperture size" when tested according to the test set forth in Roe '338. Alternatively, the Examiner's second position, Thompson '208 teaches a topsheet which receives or accepts fluid. It is however noted that while at page 23, lines 19-25 of the instant specification Applicants express the desire for the acceptance element to pass waste therethrough, the criticality of the specific effective aperture size claimed enabling the element to do so is not set forth, e.g. the criticality of 30 sq. mm rather than 25 sq mm for example has not been set forth. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ an effective aperture size as claimed on the Thompson et al device, if not already, since

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it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art as in the instant case, i.e. see discussion supra, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges by routine experimentation. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233. With respect to 3), see the Claim Language Interpretation section supra and, in addition to the portions of the prior art already cited, see also col. 1, line 11-13, col. 13, lines 43-45 and col. 31, lines 40-42 of '208 and col. 3, lines 28-29 of '022, i.e. "capable of absorbing...body waste fluids such as urine and feces", i.e. capable of absorbing/holding fluid feces. Therefore, it is the Examiner's first position that the prior art teaches a storage element 10 or a layer or sheet of 11 which is separate from 11 or the remainder of the sheets of 11 and which is element which is capable of storing fecal waste having a viscosity greater than about 10cP and less than about 2×10^5 cP at a shear rate of one l/sec in a controlled stress rheometry test, i.e. "viscous fluid bodily waste", because '208 and '022 disclose articles and/or components thereof capable of absorbing /holding menses, i.e. a "relatively thick fluid" and/or fluid feces which as disclosed by the instant application are "viscous fluid bodily wastes". Alternatively, the Examiner's second position, since '208 and '022 disclose articles and/or components capable of absorbing/holding menses, i.e. a "relatively thick fluid", or fluid feces, there is sufficient factual evidence for one to conclude that such would necessarily and inevitably include a viscosity greater than about 10cP and less than about 2×10^5 cP at a shear rate of one l/sec when tested similarly to the claimed element, i.e. in a controlled stress rheometry test. Finally, the Examiner's third position, the prior art, at a minimum, discloses the desire that the article and/or components absorb/hold menses, i.e. a "relatively thick fluid" or fluid feces, i.e. relatively thick fluid bodily wastes, i.e. the same general conditions as those claimed. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary

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skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ a storage element as claimed on the Thompson et al device, if not already, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art as in the instant case, i.e. see discussion supra, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges, i.e. the claimed range of viscosity, by routine experimentation. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

Claims 3-4: See portions of Thompson '208 and '135 cited with respect to claim 1 supra.

Claims 5-6: See portions of Thompson '208 and Lash et al '022 cited with respect to claim 1 supra, i.e. layer 11 includes layers having absorbent particles of the claimed size.

Claims 5 and 7: See portions of Thompson '208 cited with respect to claim 1 supra, and paragraph bridging pages 28-29 of the instant application, i.e. layer 10 includes nonabsorbent, fibers, i.e. particles, with wettable surfaces, i.e. liquid insensitive fibers, which fibers have a dimension of the size claimed. Note also the response to arguments, infra.

Claims 2 and 10-12 and 15-17: Applicant claims the acceptance element having an effective open area of at least 30%. However, see page 25, lines 2-5, of the instant application, and thereby Roe '338. Furthermore, see again the portions of Thompson '208 and EP '417 cited supra, i.e. the topsheet of Thompson et al includes an open area of 30-60% for enhanced acceptance of fluid. Therefore, it is the Examiner's first position that there is sufficient factual evidence for one to conclude that the topsheet of Thompson '208 would necessarily and inevitably include the claimed "effective open area" when tested according to the test set forth in Roe '338. Alternatively, the Examiner's second position, Thompson '208 teaches a topsheet which receives or accepts fluid. It is however noted that while at page 23, lines 8-13 of the instant specification Applicants express the desire for the acceptance element to pass waste

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therethrough, the criticality of the specific effective open area claimed enabling the element to do so is not set forth, e.g. the criticality of 30% rather than 28% for example has not been set forth. Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to employ an effective open area of at least about 30 % on the Thompson et al device, if not already, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art as in the instant case, i.e. see discussion supra, it is not inventive to discover the optimum or workable ranges by routine experimentation. In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233.

Response to Arguments

7. Applicant's remarks with regard to the informalities have been noted but are either deemed moot in that such issues have not been reraised or are deemed not persuasive for the reasons set forth supra. With regard to the arguments with respect to the prior art, such arguments have been considered but are deemed not persuasive for the reasons set forth supra, e.g. they are not commensurate in scope with the disclosure, the claim language and the prior art teachings.


Conclusion

8. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Karin M. Reichle whose telephone number is (571) 272-4936. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Thursday.

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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tanya Zalukaeva can be reached on (571) 272-1115. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Karin M. Reichle
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3761

KMR
June 5, 2006